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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the National Writing Project model in a rural setting, specifically the schools served by the Northern Arizona Writing Project in its first 2 years of operation. The evaluation was conducted to determine: (1) the teachers' concerns about writing process instruction before training in the Summer Institute (SI); (2) the effectiveness of the SI in preparing teachers to adopt writing process instruction; (3) any change in the teachers' concerns about writing process instruction after training in the SI; and (4) the extent to which writing process instruction had been adopted by the teachers during the first year following participation in the SI. Data were collected eight times between June 1988 and January 1990 using the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SCQ) and teacher self-reporting of classroom writing strategies. Subjects included 15 teachers of the 1988 SI and 21 teachers of the 1989 SI. Data from the SCQ indicate a shift in concerns from informational to collaboration at the end of the 5-week SIs for both the 1988 and 1989 groups. Data from self-reports indicate successes in adoption of writing process instruction in the areas of content and idea building, defining rhetorical stance, and highlighting student writing. Implications for the project include extended training in underutilized components of writing process instruction--development and ordering of ideas, assisting students with linguistic choices, and revision practices. Additionally, the project should pursue consensus-building activities within rural communities to support collaboration on a writing process model of teaching. A writing process instruction checklist is included. (Author/TJH)

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TRAINING RURAL TEACHERS TO IMPLEMENT WRITING PROCESS INSTRUCTION: A CONCERNS-BASED APPROACH

a presentation at the 1990 Annual Meeting of
the American Educational Research Association

April 16-20, 1990
Boston, Massachusetts

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the National Writing Project model for a rural setting, specifically the schools served by the Northern Arizona Writing Project in its first two years of operation. The evaluation was to determine (a) the teachers' concerns about writing process instruction before training in the Summer Institute, (b) the effectiveness of the Summer Institute in preparing teachers to adopt writing process instruction, (c) any change in the teachers' concerns about writing process instruction after training in the Summer Institute, and (d) the extent to which writing process instruction had been adopted by the teachers during the first year following participation in the Summer Institute. Data from the Stages of Concern Questionnaire indicate a shift in concerns from informational to collaboration at the end of the five week institutes for both the 1988 and 1989 groups. Data from self-reports indicate successes in adoption of writing process instruction in these areas: content and idea building, defining rhetorical stance, and highlighting student writing. Implications for the project include extended training in underutilized components of writing process instruction--development and ordering of ideas, assisting students with linguistic choices, and revision practices. Additionally, the project should pursue consensus-building activities within rural communities to support collaboration on a writing process model of teaching.

CONTEXT

Background

The National Writing Project, based at the University of California at Berkeley, has as its purpose the implementation of writing-across-the-curriculum in the nation's public schools. Founded in 1973 by Jim Gray, the National Writing Project is a consortium of 141 local Writing Projects in 44 states. Each site of the National Writing Project is committed to a partnership between a university and local public schools. Each summer teachers are selected to attend an invitational Summer Institute at each university site. In that 5-week institute, teachers K-12 share successful writing strategies they have developed in their classrooms as university faculty share current research and theory on writing. Teachers then return to their home schools to help train their colleagues in writing to learn techniques.

The assumptions which drive the National Writing Project follow:

1. Writing is a powerful but often overlooked tool for improving both communication skills and critical thinking; therefore, N.W.P. encourages teachers from all disciplines to explore the potential of writing as a tool for teaching concepts.

2. Writing is a multi-stage, recursive process which is never fully perfected; therefore, teachers must continue to work on their own writing while teaching writing to students.

3. Correctness is important to writing that is shared with readers; therefore, N.W.P. encourages participants to teach mechanics and usage in the context of meaningful writing activities.

4. Hand-in-hand theory and practice provide a sound base for creative teaching; therefore, N.W.P. participants work to discover why particular teaching strategies are effective.

5. Practicing teachers are the best teachers of other teachers; therefore, the Summer Institute seeks to train participants to work together in presenting in-services in their home districts.

6. Learning is more effective when done together; therefore, N.W.P. classes are a team effort between instructor and students.

7. Modeling is the most effective form of teaching; therefore, N.W.P. presentations model as well as explain the concept they wish to teach.

Setting

The Northern Arizona Writing Project (N.A.W.P.), a site of the National Writing Project, is based in Flagstaff, a town of 40,000 and the largest town in northern Arizona. The Project serves the northern one-third of Arizona, a rural, sparsely-populated region with distances of 300 miles between corners. This area contains more than 100 separate school districts and takes in portions of three reservations: Navajo, Hopi, and Havasupai. For the most part, school districts are small and separated by many miles. Northern Arizona University (N.A.U.), the institution at which the N.A.W.P. is housed, is a university with a strong commitment to teacher training, both pre-service and in-service. The English Department and the Center for Excellence in Education collaborate in support of the Northern Arizona Writing Project.

History

The official Northern Arizona Writing Project was founded in 1988 by Dr. Suzanne Bratcher (English Department, N.A.U.), Dr. Beth Stroble (Center for Excellence in Education, N.A.U.), and Ms. Vaughn Delp (English Department, Bradshaw Mountain High School). Seed funding came from a National Writing Project grant as well as financial support from N.A.U. and 7 school districts.

Currently in its third year, the N.A.W.P. is now serving 15 school district in the northern part of the state and on the Navajo Indian Reservation. The

first Summer Institute drew 16 teachers, the second 27; the third promises 30. Undoubtedly the Institute could grow much larger, but funding needs preclude much more growth at present.

RESEARCH/THEORY PERSPECTIVE

The districts served by the Northern Arizona Writing Project in its first two years of operation share common rural school concerns: improving their effectiveness, developing curriculum, and providing inservice training. According to Rios (1987, p. 7), educational reform efforts have raised requirements and expectations that have "underscored rural education's shortcomings, among them a lack of teachers with in-depth curricular training." The Writing Project model with its emphasis on teachers as trainer and networking teachers from various schools to bridge the isolation that prevents change seems ideally suited to increase rural teachers' expertise. But the successful pairing of research-tested writing strategies with rural teachers' practices demands attention to their current practices and concerns about the innovation.

Staff Development

Successful models of staff development share several common characteristics. Among these is a recognition that "change is a gradual and difficult process for teachers" (Guskey, 1986, p. 9). Presenting the innovation in a concrete, explicit way; addresing teachers' personal concerns directly and sensitively; and articulately and convincingly demonstrating practical, efficient uses of the innovation help teachers develop an attitude of willingness to try the new approach. And "continued support following the initial training" (p. 10) is most crucial in solidifying teachers' beliefs and attitudes. For these rural schools, staff development itself may be an innovation; to change teachers' practices and develop institutional support for the innovation of writing process instruction

require more than discrete training sessions (Fullan, 1990). Use of the concerns-based model of staff development provides a measure of the effectiveness of the Writing Project Summer Institutes, inservices, and follow-up meetings.

Concerns-Based Adoption Model

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) provides a framework for identifying a developmental progression of concerns held by those who may adopt an innovation. The diagnostic data can then be used to develop appropriate interventions based on individuals' feelings and performance relative to the innovation. The manager of change can support the individuals' needs for time, successful experience, and acquisition of new knowledge and skills in order to move them from unrelated concerns to those of self, task, and general impact. "When a concerns-based approach is used, change facilitators work in concert with teachers to address their emerging and evolving needs. In this way, not only is change viewed as a process, but the personal side of change as experienced by teachers is taken into account" (Hall & Hord, 1987, p. 17). Hall and Hord's review of concerns theory and research indicate " that concerns change over time in a fairly predictable, developmental manner" (p. 70). The CBAM model, therefore, provides both a basis for predicting and measuring changes in the summer institute teachers and a basis for providing interventions appropriate to their changes during training and the adoption process.

A Paradigm Shift

The innovation under study--writing process instruction--is informed by a changing theory of how writing works. Hairston (1982) has described the shift in emphasis from product to process as a paradigm shift. Among the twelve features of this paradigm, five are central to Writing Project training.

1. Writing is rhetorically based: audience, purpose, and occasion figure

prominently in writing tasks.

2. Writing is a recursive rather than a linear process; prewriting, writing, and revison are activities that overlap and intertwine.

3. The teaching of writing is informed by other disciplines (notably cognitive psychology and linguistics); it is based on research into the composing process.

4. Writing is a way of learning and developing as well as communicating.

5. Writing can take many forms--expressive as well as expository.

Langer and Applebee (1987) have found that the adoption of writing process instruction depends on complex variables, including characteristics of the teachers and their work environment. Teachers' conceptions of the nature of teaching and learning are central to their use of writing in their classrooms. To implement innovative ways of using writing to support students' thinking and language abilities requires complex thinking about teaching and learning. As teachers shift from emphasis on product to process, they may implement the major components of a writing process model in varied ways. Because concensus on the components of writing process instruction (Hillocks, 1986) and the components of effective teaching of writing has not been reached (Suhor, 1989), successful implementation of this innovation depends upon careful monitoring of prescribed practices and appropriate training.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the National Writing Project model for a rural setting. To accomplish that purpose, these objectives were set:

1. to determine the rural teachers' concerns about writing process instruction before training in the Summer Institute

2. to determine the effectiveness of the Summer Institute in preparing teachers to adopt writing process instruction

3. to determine any change in rural teachers' concerns about writing process instruction after training in the Summer Institute

4. to determine the extent to which writing process instruction had been adopted by teachers during the first year following participation in the Summer Institute.

METHOD AND DATA SOURCE

The data for the study were collected eight times over a two-year period: June 1988, July 1988; September 1988, February 1989, April 1989; October 1989, January 1990. Two separate sources of data were used: the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (Hall, et. al., 1979) and teacher self-reporting of classroom writing strategies in use.

Two groups of participants were used in the study: the 1988 Summer Institute teachers and the 1989 Summer Institute teachers. The Stages of Concern (SOC) Questionnaire was administered to each group immediately prior to beginning Summer Institute training (June 1988; April 1989) and following Summer Institute training (July 1988; Janurary 1990). Self-reports were elicited from teachers through application essays and interviews prior to the two Summer Institutes as well as from interviews at follow-up training sessions in September 1988, February 1989, April 1989, and October 1989 and classroom observations.

Quantitative and qualitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using categories and techniques described by Hall, George, and Rutherford (1977). Self-reports (from teacher essays and interviews) were analyzed using the Writing Process Instruction Checklist, developed by Bratcher and Stroble, using Proett and Gill's (1986) framework. [See Figure 1.]

Participants in the study were public school teachers, grades 1-12 with an average of 10 years of teaching experience (although experience ranged

from 1 year to 18 years). The 1988 participants represented 7 school districts. Of the 15 teachers from whom all SOC data were collected, 7 were elementary teachers and 8 were secondary. Of the 1988 group 6 teachers taught in schools located in towns with a population of more than 20,000; the other 9 taught in schools in rural areas of smaller populations. The 1989 participants represented 13 school districts. Of the 21 teachers from whom all SOC data were collected, 14 were elementary teachers and 7 were secondary. Of the 1989 group 7 teachers taught in schools located in towns with a population of more than 20,000; the other 14 taught in schools in rural areas of smaller populations. [See Tables 1 and 2.]

RESULTS

Stages of Concern Questionnaire

Using the Stages of Concern Questionnaire, data about teachers' intensity of concern about writing process instruction were collected in seven areas (awareness, informational, personal, management, consequence, collaboration, refocusing). Analysis of the frequency of the highest area of intensity of concern for individual teachers revealed similar patterns of concern both before and after Summer Institute training for the 1988 and 1989 groups. Before training, the highest frequency of most intense concern for both groups was in the informational area. After training, the highest frequency of most intense concern was in the collaboration area. These data are summarized in Tables 3 and 4.

Self-Reports

Information about teachers' varied uses of writing process instruction prior to the Summer Institute training revealed differences in the 1988 and 1989 groups. This information was classified using the Writing Process Instruction Checklist (Figure 1), developed by Stroble and Bratcher, based on Proett and Gill's (1986) conceptualization of a writing process model.

This checklist is an example of an innovation configuration checklist (Hord, et. al., 1987).

A comparison of the uses of the innovation before training and after training for the 1988 and 1989 groups indicates shifts in their unacceptable, acceptable, and ideal uses of variations of the innovation.

1988 group:

Prior to training, unacceptable uses of writing process instruction predominated in these components: development and ordering of ideas, defining rhetorical stance, assisting students with linguistic choices, revision practices, and highlighting student writing.

After training, unacceptable uses of writing process instruction continued to dominate development and ordering of ideas, assisting students with linguistic choices, and revision practices. Increases in ideal uses of the innovation occurred in these components: content and idea building, defining rhetorical stance, and highlighting student writing. Acceptable use of revision practices also increased. [See Tables 5 and 7.]

1989 group:

Prior to training, unacceptable uses of writing process instruction predominated in these components: development and ordering of ideas, defining rhetorical stance, assisting students with linguistic choices, revision practices, and highlighting student writing.

After training, unacceptable uses of writing process instruction continued to dominate development and ordering of ideas, assisting students with linguistic choices, and revision practices. Increases in ideal uses of the innovation occurred in these components: content and idea building, defining rhetorical stance, revision practices, and highlighting student writing. Increases in acceptable uses also increased in defining rhetorical stance, revision practices, and highlighting student writing. [See Tables 6 and 8.]

Group Comparisons:

Comparisons of the 1988 and 1989 groups prior to training reveal a greater percentage of ideal users in the 1989 group in these areas: content and idea building and development and ordering of ideas. Fewer 1989 teachers failed to specify at least one rhetorical stance in their writing tasks for students. Only in the area of revision did the 1988 group show greater sophistication--employing peer revision more often than the 1989 group before training.

After training 1989 group showed greater increases in acceptable and ideals users than the 1988 group in these areas: development and ordering of ideas, defining rhetorical stance, assisting students with linguistic choices, and revision practices. [See Tables 7 and 8.]

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study document developmental growth in concerns about writing process instruction in two groups of public school teachers. Both groups moved from the need for information to a desire to collaborate with others in implementation after five weeks of the Summer Institute. The concern for collaboration is consistent with the need for collaboration among teachers in isolated, rural settings. The Summer Institute helps these teachers develop their desire to collaborate with other teachers from the Summer Institute and teachers in their home districts. This desire can be served by consensus-building activities within their rural communities, facilitated by writing project teachers. Consensus about the importance of writing process instruction as opposed to a writing product orientation is needed among administrators, teachers, and parents in their home districts. To reach these distant constituencies and to support the networking favored by the writing project teachers, the N.A.W.P. has instituted these programs in 1989-90:

1. an inservice workshop for administrators at one rural site
2. an on-campus summer academy for administrators
3. more on-site visits to observe in writing project teachers' classrooms
4. follow-up meetings that feature presentations by writing project teachers
5. a state-level conference hosted by the three Arizona Writing Projects--designed to reach administrators and teachers not currently served by one of the projects
6. an on-campus advanced seminar for writing project teachers desiring further training
7. more on-site inservice workshops for teachers, some with a focus on curriculum integration or second language learners, in order to offer more than basic writing process instruction information.

This study also documents the teachers' growth in their uses of the innovation in several critical components of a writing process model. Many of the teachers in both groups have moved from isolated rudimentary forms of journaling, brainstorming, or freewriting to relatively sophisticated experiments with varied audiences and purposes for writing. Their self-reports no longer catalogue writing assignments merely specifying multiple forms of writing; instead they mention rhetorical purposes for writing--building self-esteem, supporting content area learning, writing to specific audiences, as examples. Given the greater range of sophistication among the 1989 members prior to training, their greater percentages of acceptable and ideal uses of the innovation after training are not surprising. Yet, deficiencies in use still exist, most notably in the areas of development and ordering of ideas, assisting students with linguistic choices, and revision practices. That two of these areas were considered less critical components of the innovation--development and

ordering and linguistic choices--may indicate a deficiency in the Summer Institute training with related deficiencies in teachers' use.

The deficiencies may also indicate that certain components of a writing process model are easier to implement than others. Langer and Applebee (1987) and Guskey (1987) found that teachers most quickly adopt an innovation that is consistent with their classroom-tested practices. They are less quick to adopt an innovation that requires radical change in their behavior, particularly in the way they structure classroom tasks and the way they have conceptualized teaching and learning. When an innovation asks teachers to evaluate learning in a new way, the innovation presents a major challenge. If assisting students with developing and ordering ideas, making linguistic choices, and revising papers requires a restructuring of classroom tasks or a new way of conceptualizing teaching and learning, then those components of the innovation may not come into teachers' practices.

In the early stages of implementation, teachers may be more likely to adopt components of the innovation piecemeal, violating the purpose of the innovation. For example, a focus on publishing students' work without adequate time allowed for content and idea building or development and ordering, can result in a focus on the product of writing without the necessary process to reach the product. Or, an excessive emphasis on personal writing in journal form before students write and comparatively little emphasis on making the rhetorical or linguistic choices or revising and highlighting can result in a superficial use of writing in the classroom, never allowing students to move through an entire process.

Among the major implications for the Northern Arizona Writing Project are the need for long-term, extended training and support to enable teachers to implement a full writing process with their students. Greater use of the Writing Process Instruction Checklist as a way of communicating the purpose and ideal form of the innovation may assist trainers as they work with these teachers. Trainers must also couple the information gained

from conerns data and innovation use data to make curricular decisions for the Summer Institutes. The 1989 group expressed a need for information, yet their current uses of the innovation suggest a need for more sophisticated information than the 1988 group. The Summer Institutes should add greater emphasis on a critical component--testing writing against a rubric--finding ways to make this variation and teachers' current practices more compatible. Finally, follow-up meetings should continue to offer problem-solving segments in which like-minded teachers discuss issues of interest: collaborating with colleagues, using peer revision groups, and reaching second language learners.

Figure 1 Writing Process Instruction Checklist

*1. Content and Idea Building (journaling, brainstorming, clustering, mapping, outlining, etc.)

(1)	(2)	(3)
Teacher uses at least 2 different strategies.	Teacher uses at least 1 strategy.	Teacher does not use any strategy.

2. Development and Ordering (classifying, applying, generalizing, structuring, grouping, etc.)

(1)	(2)	(3)
Teacher uses at least 2 different strategies.	Teacher uses at least 1 strategy.	Teacher does not use any strategy.

*3. Rhetorical Stance (voice, audience, purpose, form)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Writing tasks structure all components.	Writing tasks structure 3 components.	Writing tasks structure 2 components.	Writing tasks structure 1 component.	Writing tasks structure no component.

4. Linguistic Choices (word choice, figurative language, sentence structure, sentence type, syntax)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Teacher uses strategies for all 5.	Teacher uses strategies for 4.	Teacher uses strategies for 3.	Teacher uses strategies for 2.	Teacher uses strategies for 1.	Teacher uses strategies for none.

*5. Revision (getting responses, raising questions, testing against criteria, proofreading)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Students get response from students and test against criteria.	Students get response from students OR test against criteria.	Students get response from teacher only.	Students get no response before revision.	No revision expected.

*6. Highlighting (sharing, publishing, mailing, posting, filing, reading)

(1)	(2)	(3)
Teacher uses at least 2 different strategies.	Teacher uses at least 1 strategy.	Teacher does not highlight students' writing.

Code: _____ Variations to the right are unacceptable; variations to the left are acceptable.

----------Variations to the left are ideal, as prescribed by NAWP.

* Denotes critical components

[based on Proett & Gill's (1986) conceptualization of the writing process]

Table 1 Number of Teachers by Grade Level for Whom Concerns Data Were Collected, Pre and Post

Year	Elementary	Secondary
1988	8	8
1989	14	7

Table 2 Number of Teachers by School Location for Whom Concerns Data Were Collected, Pre and Post

Year	Town (> 20,000)	Rural (<20,000)
1988	7	9
1989	7	14

Table 3 Frequency of Highest Concerns Stages: 1988 Group Pre and Post Summer Institute

	Stages of Concern						
	Awareness	Informational	Personal	Management	Consequence	Collaboration	Refocusing
Frequency Pre	1	7	1	0	3	4	0
Frequency Post	0	1	1	0	0	14	0

N = 16

Table 4 Frequency of Highest Concerns Stages: 1989 Group Pre and Post Summer Institute

	Stages of Concern						
	Awareness	Informational	Personal	Management	Consequence	Collaboration	Refocusing
Frequency Pre	5	10	0	0	0	6	0
Frequency Post	4	0	2	1	1	11	2

N = 21

Table 5 1988 Summer Fellows' Use of Writing in Their Classrooms. Before Training (June 1988) and After Training (September 1988 through October 1989)

Percentage of Teachers Using Each Variation of Each Component Before/After

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Content/ Idea Building	0/27	64/47	36/26			
Development, Ordering	1 0/0	2 0/0	3 100/100			
Rhetorical Stance	1 0/0	2 0/57	3 50/7	4 29/0	5 21/36	
Linguistic Choices	1 0/0	2 0/0	3 0/0	4 0/14	5 21/7	6 79/79
Revision	1 0/0	2 21/29	3 0/0	4 7/21	5 72/50	
Highlighting	1 7/43	2 29/21	3 64/36			

N = 14 Before/ 15 After

Table 6 1989 Summer Fellows' Use of Writing in Their Classrooms. Before Training (April 1989) and After Training (September through January 1990)

Percentage of Teachers Using Each Variation of Each Component Before/After

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Content/ Idea Building	13/20	67/40	20/40			
Development, Ordering	1 4/0	2 8/13	3 88/87			
Rhetorical Stance	1 0/13	2 4/13	3 58/60	4 38/0	5 0/13	
Linguistic Choices	1 0/0	2 0/7	3 4/0	4 8/7	5 25/0	6 63/86
Revision	1 0/7	2 8/27	3 0/0	4 21/0	5 71/66	
Highlighting	1 0/13	2 38/47	3 62/40			

N = 24 Before/ 15 After

Table 7 1988 Summer Fellows' Use of Writing in Their Classrooms, Before Training (June 1988) and After Training (September 1988 through October 1989)

Percentage of Teachers Using Ideal, Acceptable, and Unacceptable Variations of Each Component Before/After

Component	Ideal	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Content/ Idea Building	0/27	64/47	36/26
Development, Ordering	0/0	0/0	100/100
Rhetorical Stance	0/57	50/7	50/36
Linguistic Choices	0/0	0/0	100/100
Revision	0/0	21/29	79/71
Highlighting	7/43	29/21	64/36

N = 14 Before/15 After

Table 8 1989 Summer Fellows' Use of Writing in Their Classrooms, Before Training (April 1989) and After Training (September through January 1990)

Percentage of Teachers Using Ideal, Acceptable, and Unacceptable Variations of Each Component Before/After

Component	Ideal	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Content/ Idea Building	13/20	67/40	20/40
Development, Ordering	4/0	8/13	88/87
Rhetorical Stance	4/26	58/60	38/13
Linguistic Choices	0/7	4/0	96/93
Revision	0/7	8/27	92/66
Highlighting	0/13	38/47	62/40

N - 24 Before/ 15 After

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